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New York

Chairman: Mr. Maiolini ..... (Italy)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

General debate

The Chairman: This afternoon, we will continue with the general exchange of views. But before giving the floor to the first speaker on my list, allow me to remind delegates of two points. First, I would like to urge delegates to bear in mind that their interventions have a time limit. They should be less than 10 minutes. If delegates do not mind, I will reserve the right to remind speakers that their time is up, if necessary. This is out of respect for everyone who is to take the floor. The second point is to remind delegations that the deadline for inscription on the speakers list is today at 6 p.m.

The first speaker on my list is the representative of Greece, Ambassador Adamantios Vassilakis, on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to congratulate all the members of the Bureau upon their election and you personally, Sir, as Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2003 session. United Nations Disarmament Commission. We are confident that under your able guidance we will reach a successful conclusion on both agenda items. In this regard, I would like to express the appreciation of the European Union for your statement.

I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dhanapala, for his introductory statement. Since this is the last time Mr. Dhanapala is attending such an important meeting as head of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the European Union (EU) wishes to thank him for his dedication and good work throughout all these years in promoting the role of the United Nations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Disarmament Commission resumes its work this year in order to further develop and to conclude positively the two items on its agenda: ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Our ultimate goal is to present to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session agreed recommendations that will be useful for all Member States in their policy-making in the respective fields.

The European Union expresses its sincere hope that the cessation and reversal of the arms race that came in the wake of the Cold War will be consolidated in an irreversible manner and that concrete progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation will be achieved. The EU, for its part, will continue to work towards this goal.

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The security of the international community is being challenged, both globally and regionally, by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and by the risk that non-State actors could gain access to those weapons. It is thus of utmost importance that the existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements are effectively implemented and fully complied with. The European Union reaffirms its commitment to legally binding instruments on arms reduction with provisions ensuring irreversibility, verification and transparency. The EU stresses that preserving the integrity of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and upholding its non-proliferation obligations are vital for international and regional security. The NPT must not be undermined by State parties seeking to acquire nuclear weapons or to contribute directly or indirectly to their proliferation. The EU also continues to attach great importance to achieving universal adherence to the Treaty.

The European Union continues to view the NPT as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. Therefore, the EU strongly supports the upholding of the principles, and effective implementation of the objectives, laid down in the Treaty, as well as the decisions and the resolutions of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and of the Final Document adopted by the 2000 Review Conference.

The European Union strongly believes that the Disarmament Commission should build on the consensus achieved at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We therefore consider it important that the report of the Disarmament Commission's deliberations reflect the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. In this context, the EU would therefore welcome further development of the paper put forward by the Chairman of Working Group I.

With respect to the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the European Union stresses the need to achieve progress in the implementation of the 13 practical steps contained therein. Those steps remain the performance benchmark for nuclear disarmament.

The European Union calls for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and calls upon all States that have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so without delay and unconditionally, in particular the 13 States whose ratification is required for entry into force. Pending the entry into force of the CTBT, the EU urges all States to abide by a moratorium. In this respect, the EU welcomes the recent decision for the convening by the United Nations Secretary-General of a conference on the entry into force of the Treaty in Vienna, from 3 to 5 September 2003.

The European Union calls for the immediate start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in accordance with the statement of the Special Coordinator in 1995 and the mandate contained therein, taking into consideration both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

The European Union calls for the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament. It calls for the entry into force and early implementation of the Moscow Treaty, and in this context it reaffirms the importance of the principles of irreversibility and transparency.

The European Union calls for the preservation and continued implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), including its verification and transparency mechanisms. It also calls for the further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons, regular reporting on Article VI and the Middle East in accordance with the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, and the strengthening of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in application of the safeguards agreements and the additional protocols.

The European Union acknowledges the importance of the nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned. Such zones enhance global and regional peace and security. We welcome and support the signature and ratification by the nuclear weapon States of the relevant protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zones following completion of the necessary consultations.

The European Union deeply regrets that the Conference on Disarmament, the central multilateral forum at the disposal of the international community

for disarmament negotiations, has remained inactive for almost seven years, as it is unable to agree on a programme of work. The effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament is a matter of great urgency for the European Union, and we remain fully supportive of all efforts that might help to overcome the current stalemate. For the EU, the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, to which I referred earlier, continues to be of the highest priority.

The Disarmament Commission will also continue to work on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. The EU hopes that fruitful discussions during this session will lead to concrete and comprehensive recommendations in that field in order to strengthen confidence and security and to achieve disarmament, with the building of an environment of cooperative security as the ultimate goal.

The European Union therefore supports and encourages all efforts aimed at the promotion of confidence- and security-building measures. The Disarmament Commission can usefully contribute to that by the preparation of a list of such confidence- and security-building measures. In this context, the European Union welcomes the paper put forward by the outgoing Chairperson of Working Group II which includes principles as well as practical measures. At a later stage, we will submit more specific comments and proposals on that paper.

Confidence- and security-building measures are valuable tools in conflict prevention, as well as in post-conflict stabilization and rehabilitation. In both situations the essential task of arms control is the creation of a positive process in which measures implemented can create confidence and security through transparency and predictability. This also implies that they are an integrated part of a larger process.

The EU supports and actively promotes the adoption of confidence- and security-building measures when there is a need for the step-by-step building of trust and the establishment of new patterns of interaction. In times of increased tension, openness and predictability are more important than ever. This implies, inter alia, verification regimes that ensure the reliability of the information provided.

Consideration could also be given to the establishment, on a voluntary basis, of regional, subregional or bilateral confidence- and security-building measures to meet specific needs. They could complement existing confidence- and security-building measures or arms control agreements, and they should contribute to strengthening overall security and stability.

The European Union encourages States to involve civil society and non-governmental organizations when considering possible new confidence- and security-building measures, as well as, when applicable, when implementing such measures.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) area is a prime example of where confidence- and security-building measures have contributed to a new pattern of interaction. Since the first confidence- and security-building measures were agreed at the Stockholm Conference in the mid-1980s, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the successive Vienna documents have been instrumental in the creation of a new military culture of openness and transparency. Those documents, together with the Open Skies Treaty, which entered into force in January 2002, constitute the cornerstone of confidence- and security-building measures on conventional arms in Europe, and are fully supported by the European Union.

Confidence- and security-building measures should cover not only measures, but also principles. The OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security contains norms that are fundamental to the European Union member States and other OSCE participating States. The Code stipulates, inter alia, that all armed forces must be under effective democratic and constitutional control and must have clearly defined tasks. Furthermore, all participating States are committed to educating their military personnel in international humanitarian law and in the rules governing armed conflict and to ensuring transparency and public access to information related to the armed forces. The EU expresses the hope that the Disarmament Commission will endorse these principles in its recommendations.

The 1998 EU Code of Conduct ushered in a new degree of transparency between Governments in arms transactions by building upon common criteria for arms

exports, as well as by establishing an information exchange and consultations mechanism.

The OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, adopted in November 2000, served as an important inspiration for the Programme of Action that was adopted by the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The EU hopes that the provisions concerning confidence- and security-building measures contained in the OSCE Document can be reflected in the work of the upcoming first biennial meeting of States on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which will be a essential step in the process leading up to the next conference in 2006.

The contribution of the European Union Joint Action on Small Arms to combating the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons encompasses confidence- and security-building measures, and in that spirit we provide technical and financial assistance to many programmes and projects related to small arms and light weapons.

The EU considers transparency in armaments to be fundamental to building confidence and security. In that context, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which is now in its tenth year of operation, is a key instrument. The EU is committed to securing the widest possible participation in the Register and to improving its relevance and effectiveness in a way that continues to contribute to regional and subregional confidence-building efforts. In that context, the EU hopes that this year's review of the scope and operation of the Register will secure a meaningful expansion of its scope, possibly in the field of small arms and light weapons.

The EU reiterates its endorsement of General Assembly resolution 57/81, entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures".

We also recall our support for the May 1996 Disarmament Commission guidelines for arms transfers, as well as the April 1999 Disarmament Commission guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace.

In closing, I should like to say that the European Union will continue to actively participate in all appropriate forums to discuss and elaborate concrete confidence- and security-building measures, which contribute to security and cooperation among all States Members of the United Nations. We are confident that, under your able guidance, Sir, and given the work already done by the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, we will have fruitful deliberations and a productive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Thamrin (Indonesia): I should like to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, in my capacity as Coordinator of its Working Group on Disarmament. The Movement wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to preside over the Disarmament Commission during this year's session. We remain confident that, under your able guidance, the 2003 session will succeed in fulfilling the mandate entrusted to us by the General Assembly. The Movement would also like to extend its felicitations to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for his lucid statement this morning on various disarmament and international security issues.

The Movement reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues, and also underlines the importance of the successful conclusion of its 2003 session.

We further underline how important it is — as mentioned in paragraph 26 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session on the General Assembly on disarmament (SSOD I) — for all States Members of the United Nations to reaffirm their full commitment to the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and their obligation strictly to observe its principles as well as other relevant and generally accepted principles of international law relating to the maintenance of international peace and security.

We stress the special importance of refraining from the threat or use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or against peoples under colonial or foreign domination seeking to exercise their right to self-determination and to achieve independence; non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs

of other States; the inviolability of international frontiers; and the peaceful settlement of disputes having regard to the inherent right of States to individual and collective self-defence in accordance with the Charter.

With regard to item 4 of our agenda, entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", the Movement reiterates its principled positions on nuclear disarmament and the related issue of nuclear non-proliferation. We also reiterate our deep concern over the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament, which remains the Movement's highest priority; the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the elimination of their arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament; and the threat to humanity derived from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and from their possible use or threat of use. We underscore the need to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear weapons and emphasize, in this regard, the urgent need to commence negotiations without delay.

The Movement also remains deeply concerned at strategic defence doctrines that set out rationales for the use of nuclear weapons and the Alliance Strategic Concept adopted by NATO in April 1999, which not only maintain unjustifiable concepts on international security based on promoting and developing military alliances and policies of nuclear deterrence, but also includes new elements aimed at opening even more the scope for possible use or threat of use of force by NATO.

In the context of the nuclear posture review that has been undertaken by the United States of America, the Movement expresses serious misgivings about the development of new types of nuclear weapons that are being considered and reiterates that the provision for the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States is in contravention of the negative security assurances that have been provided by the nuclear-weapon States.

We reiterate that these developments are incompatible with the assurances provided by the nuclear-weapon State at the time of the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that it would prevent the improvement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Movement reiterates its longstanding and principled position for the total elimination of all nuclear testing and universal adherence to the Treaty, especially by the nuclear-weapon States, which should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament.

The Movement continues to consider the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free-zones created by the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba as positive steps towards attaining the objective of nuclear disarmament. We welcome the efforts aimed at establishing new nuclear-weapon-free-zones in all regions of the world. The Movement also welcomes Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, Cuba's ratification of the Tlatelolco Treaty and the ongoing consultations between the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the nuclear-weapon States on the Protocol to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty.

The Movement, while noting the signing of the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reduction between the Russian Federation and the United States on 24 May 2002, stresses that reductions in deployments and in operational status cannot substitute for irreversible cuts in, and the total elimination of, nuclear weapons.

The Movement reaffirms that in efforts towards the objective of nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other and should, wherever possible, be pursued simultaneously to promote regional and international peace and security.

The Movement reiterates the importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. We regret that the continued inflexible postures of some of the nuclear-weapon States continue to prevent this forum from establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

We emphasize the need to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention. We reiterate our call for its establishment as soon as possible and as the highest priority. We underline once again the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. In this regard, we

regret that no progress has been made in the fulfilment of this obligation, despite a lapse of six years.

The Movement expresses its strong concern at the growing resort to unilateralism and unilaterally imposed prescriptions and in this context strongly underlines and affirms that multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, provide the only sustainable method of addressing disarmament and international security issues. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of resolution 57/63 by the General Assembly on the "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation".

The Movement again calls for an international conference, at the earliest possible date, with the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified framework of time to eliminate all nuclear weapons; to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use; and to provide for their destruction.

In this context, we reiterate the resolve expressed at the Millennium Summit by the heads of State or Government, as contained in the Millennium Declaration, to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating nuclear dangers.

Members of the Movement reaffirm that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. They reiterate their conviction that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority by the members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As regards agenda item 5, the Movement supports practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms as a way to strengthen international peace and security. However, because of the nuclear threat to human civilization, nuclear disarmament must continue to be accorded priority. But we recognize that since the Second World War, millions have lost their lives in numerous conflicts fought with conventional weapons, and current trends do not give any reason to believe that there will be a decrease in the incidence or severity of such conflicts. Hence, the situation concerning conventional arms is a source of increasing concern.

We believe that confidence-building is neither a substitute nor a precondition for disarmament measures. Yet their potential for creating an atmosphere conducive to arms control and disarmament has been demonstrated in various parts of the world. We further believe that an unbalanced and incomplete approach, especially in some regions of the world, cannot attain the desired result of building confidence.

We also believe that confidence-building measures, especially when applied in a comprehensive manner, can be conducive to achieving structures of security based on cooperation and openness and thus contribute to the wider objective of the renunciation of the threat or use of force. Implementation by all States of the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures is of significance, taking fully into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a particular region.

We stress the need for the development and implementation of confidence-building measures as a concrete means to facilitate the disarmament and arms limitation process and to improve the prospects for the peaceful settlement of disputes, thus helping to maintain and enhance regional and international peace and security. In that regard, we underline the importance of the reduction of military expenditures — in accordance with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armament — and we urge all States to devote the resources made available through such savings to economic and social development, in particular in the fight against poverty.

We express our firm support for the unilateral, bilateral and multilateral measures adopted by some Governments that are aimed at reducing military expenditures and thereby help to strengthen regional and international peace and security. We recognize that confidence-building measures assist in that regard.

In conclusion, the Movement wishes to reiterate its readiness to cooperate with you, Mr. Chairman, and with the rest of the Bureau for the success of the 2003 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Lee Ho-jin (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission during this session. My delegation is confident that, under your able leadership, we will be able to achieve significant progress in this substantive session. We assure you of our full support to that end.

As an important deliberative body within the disarmament machinery of the United Nations, the Commission has served as a useful forum for dealing with the increasingly complex issues in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. Although we were not able to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Commission with a substantive session in 2002, a year's respite has provided us with an opportunity to reflect on the various events of 2001 and 2002 — particularly the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 — and to assess their implications for the disarmament process and for global security.

Under those circumstances of unprecedented uncertainty, the Commission is obligated to undertake more strenuous efforts aimed at a productive outcome through its deliberations on the important issues of disarmament and international security. In that regard, the Commission's consideration of the two substantive items before it — namely, ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms — is meaningful.

I should like to begin by touching upon the issue of the effectiveness of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime in the context of the new global security environment. First of all, we cannot fail to underscore the urgency of fortifying and preserving the integrity of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. As non-proliferation and disarmament instruments are not self-implementing, the efficacy of such regimes relies to a great extent on the political will of States parties.

One conspicuous trend in that context is the growing recognition of the need to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the monitoring and verification mechanisms of global non-proliferation instruments. Indeed, verifying compliance and detecting incidents of non-compliance have become top security priorities at both the global and the regional levels. My delegation believes that the international community is urgently required to generate impetus for the strengthening of verification and compliance mechanisms in order to prevent any further encroachment on the non-proliferation regime. In addition, we consider it essential to promote the universality of the Additional Protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreements. With its Additional Protocol, the IAEA can provide increased assurance of both the non-divergence of declared materials and the absence of non-declared activities and materials.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 highlighted the importance of our work in strengthening measures for nuclear safety and security. We need to identify areas that require our urgent action. It goes without saying that Member States should resolve to prevent nuclear materials and technologies from falling into the hands of non-State actors. It is encouraging to note that the IAEA, as the competent authority in nuclear non-proliferation, has embarked upon important measures to that end.

Moreover, my delegation welcomes the Group of Eight (G-8) Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, adopted at the G-8 Summit last year, as a clear demonstration of the willingness of major States to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We hope that Member States will follow suit with similar positive actions, particularly by exercising robust export controls on sensitive nuclear and dual-use items. In that regard, we are pleased to announce that the Republic of Korea will host the Nuclear Suppliers Group plenary meeting in May this year.

The Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference marked a significant achievement in the field of nuclear disarmament. My delegation believes that the guidelines laid out in the Document — particularly the 13 practical steps — serve not only as a measuring stick to gauge our progress in this field but also as a road map for achieving our ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament.

In that regard, my delegation considers it regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament remains unable to break the impasse that has kept it from beginning its substantive work. In our view, as a next logical step towards nuclear non-proliferation and

disarmament, it is imperative that the Conference begin negotiations on a universal and verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty without further delay. It is also crucial that every effort be made to ensure the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) at the earliest possible date. Moreover, existing moratoriums on nuclear testing must be maintained while sustained support is accorded the establishment of an effective monitoring mechanism by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Since the adoption of the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference in 2000, expectations have been steadily increasing for progress in the implementation of disarmament and transparency measures on the part of the nuclear-weapon States. The five nuclear-weapon States should translate their unequivocal commitment to disarmament into action through systematic and progressive efforts.

However, it should also be recognized that nuclear disarmament is a dynamic and complex process that is inextricably connected to the international security environment. A gradual step-by-step approach would therefore be a realistic and pragmatic method with which to proceed. In this context, we welcome the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty concluded by the United States and the Russian Federation last year, and we are pleased to note the ratification of that Treaty by the United States Senate just this month. It is our hope that such progress in bilateral nuclear-reductions agreements will facilitate similar disarmament initiatives in the future.

Furthermore, my delegation would like to recall the overwhelming call to action voiced at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which called on nuclear-weapon States to adopt increased transparency and openness measures regarding their nuclear arsenals and postures. We look forward to seeing more progress in that direction at the second session of the Preparatory Committee, which is to be held in April.

Although my delegation shares the view of the representative of Japan that the Disarmament Commission is not the proper forum to discuss the issue of nuclear non-compliance, my delegation cannot but express its most serious concern about North Korea's continued non-compliance with its safeguards agreement and its continued defiance of its non-proliferation obligations. That violation not only constitutes an open and unacceptable challenge to the integrity and credibility of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime; it also jeopardizes peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

The Korean Government firmly believes that the North Korean nuclear issue can be resolved through peaceful means. For the peaceful settlement of that critical issue, North Korea should first of all retract its announcement of its withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and comply fully with its safeguards obligations under the provisions of the NPT. Moreover, North Korea's nuclear weapons programme should be dismantled in a prompt, verifiable and irreversible manner. My delegation also reaffirms its commitment to the South-North Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We urge North Korea to do the same.

Moving to the second item on the agenda, my delegation would like to underscore the contribution that confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms have made in certain regions towards reducing the dangers of armed conflict and of misunderstanding or miscalculation in military activities. Given the heightened non-traditional security threats and increased interdependence among States, the role of confidence-building measures has become more important than ever before as regards preventing conflict and managing elements of uncertainty. In fact, the new global security landscape has highlighted the need for strengthened confidence-building measures to further promote mutual trust and dispel concerns about military operations or activities by encouraging openness and transparency.

My delegation hopes that this year's discussion will bring forth comprehensive and concrete recommendations in that field. To that end, my delegation would like to enumerate certain principles that we regard as being particularly important.

First, as building confidence and establishing cooperation in security matters is a learning-by-doing process, we need to develop confidence-building measures by employing a practical and step-by-step approach. Moreover, as trust cannot be built overnight, we must remain patient in order to support and encourage every effort aimed at promoting confidence-

building measures. In that process political will is not only a driving force for the initiation of confidence-building measures; it is also important for their implementation.

Secondly, confidence-building measures should be established on the basis of the premise that the security of a given State in a specific region is indivisible from, and inextricably linked to, the security of the region as a whole. We believe that when confidence-building measures are built with that in mind, they can be firmly rooted in a framework of durable interaction.

Thirdly, in developing and building confidence-building measures, we need to take heed of the applicability of these measures to the specific security circumstances of a region. To be effectively implemented, confidence-building measures need to be tailored to the particular security needs of countries in a region or subregion. However, that does not necessarily exclude the possibility that some region-specific confidence-building measures might be applied in a global context.

Fourthly, continuous efforts are needed to intensify and consolidate the process of establishing confidence-building measures. We have seen some cases in which confidence-building measures have evolved into institutionalized measures, such as compulsory on-site inspections as a means of verification and mechanisms for intensive consultation and communications. Furthermore, we cannot fail to emphasize the importance of employing a comprehensive approach in expanding areas of cooperation. A wider scope of cooperation would certainly help to prevent any backsliding that could be caused by intermittent spells of mistrust among participating States.

It is acknowledged that one of the greatest challenges in the field of conventional arms is the illegal proliferation of, and trafficking in, small arms and light weapons, which continue to exacerbate conflict situations, claim innocent lives and impede post-conflict peace-building. The international community achieved significant progress in this field by adopting the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001. By reaching agreement on a number of measures related to the manufacture, marking, tracing, record-keeping, export control, stock-pile management, surplus-reduction and destruction of those weapons, the Programme of Action has remarkably established a significant set of confidence-building measures in this field. Needless to say, the confidence-building measures that we have developed in the field of small arms will provide us with valuable lessons and sources for reflection for the future. However, since we are still at the beginning of the long process of implementing the Programme of Action, we look forward to the convening of the first biennial meeting of States, which is scheduled for July this year.

One successful example of the practical application of confidence-building measures on a global scale is that of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which my delegation believes has helped to increase transparency in military affairs since its inception in 1992. My delegation is pleased to note that the number of States submitting reports to the Register has been steadily increasing. As an active participant in the Register, we hope that the international community will greatly benefit from the increased use of this important mechanism. At the same time, we would like to encourage wider participation and increased effectiveness in its operations in the years to come.

Regional initiatives have proven to be an effective way of developing and promoting confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. It is worth noting that in some regions advances in the establishment and promotion of confidence-building measures have helped ease longstanding tension.

In the East Asian region, the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations has promoted transparency and dialogue by providing a unique forum for the high-level discussion of security issues and the implementation of confidence-building measures. The Republic of Korea has participated in a number of regional initiatives on confidence-building measures. In 2001, the Republic of Korea and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) co-hosted a conference to assess the applicability of OSCE's confidence- and security-building measures in the North-East Asian region. Detailed discussions of the applicability and utility of OSCE's confidence-building measures served as an important source of inspiration for the future initiation of such measures in the North-East Asian region.

The Disarmament Commission has a full and varied agenda before it. Considering that this will be the last session for the discussion of the items of nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures on conventional weapons, there is a sense of urgency about making definitive progress in our deliberations. We look forward to working with the other delegations in a constructive and balanced manner with a view to maximizing the results of future multilateral disarmament efforts.

The Chairman: I should like to remind representatives to keep their statements to a reasonable length. We have eight speakers tomorrow morning and eleven in the afternoon. All of them have the right to express their views.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.